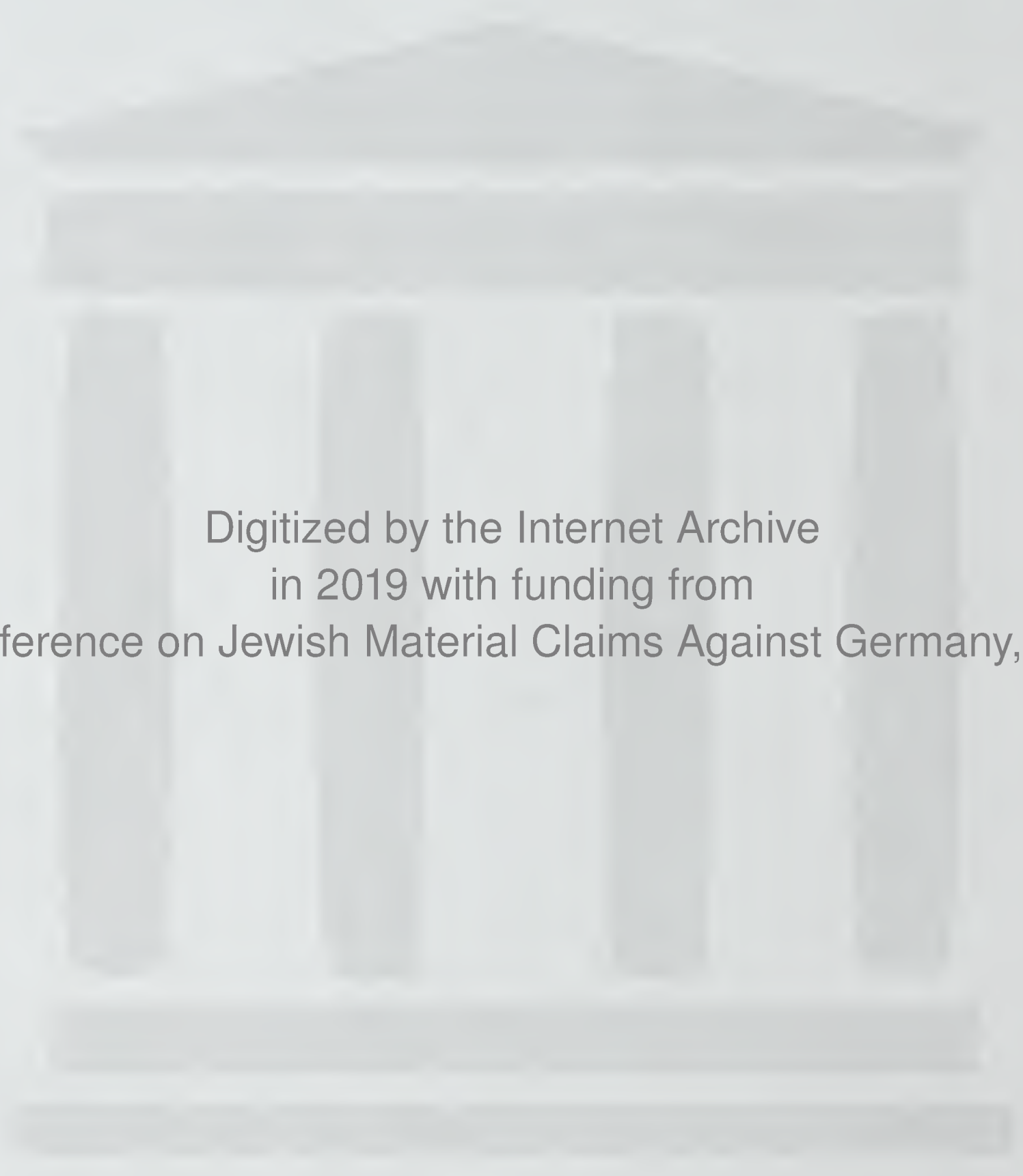


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CHARLES J. TICH0
MEMOIRS
1938-1941

THE GATHERING STORM

I'm not sure when I started to suspect that something was wrong. It might have been when my parents would suddenly stop talking when I walked into the room. I was used to them doing that once in a while, but now they seemed to be doing it more often. I was also asked to leave the room more often than usual so that I would not hear what was being discussed. I seemed to meet a similar treatment when other family members or family friends spoke to my parents. Suddenly there seemed to be an important subject that we, the children, were not supposed to know about. Needless to say, it was all very puzzling to us.

My Mother's youngest sister, Josepha Klein, (who everyone in the family called Mammie) had been staying with us for many years. Unmarried and in her early thirties, Mammie was one of our favorite relatives. She took us on walks, told us stories, read books to us, bought us presents and told us about life in the United States where she had visited. One day we suddenly learned that she was returning to the United States and was not coming back for a long time. That was quite a shock to us. Her sudden departure was very upsetting. Perhaps it was her disappearance that aroused my concerns that life was changing dramatically.

Then there was the time that my Mother's oldest sister, Gizela, and her husband Moritz Rooz and some of their children arrived in Brno. They had been living in Berlin, Germany, and left there rather suddenly. Uncle Moritz went to work for Ticho Brothers and his son Walter (he was called Wolf at that time) opened a furrier salon. Their two daughters, Claire and Francis also found work in Brno. "Tante" Gizela became one of our favorite people. She was dependable like a rock. She was always doing something --- if she wasn't cooking or baking, she was knitting, crocheting or doing some intricate needlework. Her cooking was a revelation after the simple meals the children ate at our house and her baked goods and

cakes were out of this world. A visit to aunt Gizela's house was a holiday. Uncle Moritz was a quiet man who obviously was a firm believer in Jewish traditions. He had a great singing voice and Chanukah celebrations were a joy at his house as we sang all six stanzas of "Mah Oz Zur". Yet, even though we learned to love our new uncle and aunt, their flight from Berlin seemed strange. In my world of an eight year old these were major changes in what had been, till now, a fairly steady existence.

The quiet and security, to which I had become accustomed, was occasionally deeply disturbed by an ugly voice which I heard once in a while on the radio. The man was screaming in a raspy voice and people were shouting and applauding. I knew he was speaking in German, but I could not understand him even though I spoke German fluently. I tried to understand what he was yelling about, but had real trouble making sense of his raving. Just, occasionally, I would recognize the word "Jude" which means Jew in German. When my parents caught me listening to him they would ask me to turn the radio off. Soon I learned that the voice belonged to the new leader in Germany, Adolf Hitler.

Now we started to hear some very distressing reports as to what was happening to some Jews in Germany. I was not told about these events. I just overheard little snatches of conversations. "Did you hear that Dr. Oppenheimer was fired from his job as the head of the State Hospital?" "...and they made Professor Rosen scrub the sidewalk with a toothbrush on his hands and knees in front of the university...." "....and Jews can no longer go to operas, concerts or any public events..." "...they burned the temple and the torah scrolls were unrolled in the gutter..." "....then they cut off his beard and made him spit on the mezzuzah..." These bits of highly disturbing conversations came ever more often. I was used to a little anti-semitism from the Czechs, but this was something most disturbing.

Things were now changing rapidly. In 1937 the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Garigue Masaryk, died at the age of 87. He had been a most beloved leader of our country and everyone was very sad. People cried in the streets and brought flowers and wreaths to memorials that were set up in every town and village of the nation. The country truly felt as if it had lost a father. We had a very sad memorial service at the school and we were surprised to see that some of our tough professors actually had tears in their eyes and were wiping their noses from time to time. Many people felt as if they had lost a member of their family. Jews, in particular, took the death very hard. President Masaryk had been a firm believer in democratic principles and always insisted that all religious and ethnic groups in Czechoslovakia must be treated equally. He requested that he be buried in a simple grave in the village cemetery near his favorite summer residence in Lany. My allegiance to this great man is such that I visit his grave when I visit the Czech Republic. It warms my heart to see the flowers on his grave each time I visit and see the occasional other visitor who came to pay his or her respect more than sixty years after his passing. His death was a severe blow to the stability of Europe and I overheard my uncle David say: "Now the Germans wont be afraid to start trouble." and I wondered what he meant by that.

In the same year the German army marched into Austria and that country became part of the "Greater" German Reich. The Austrians lined the streets and cheered as the German Army arrived in the country. Now the disquieting reports were coming more often and became a major concern of the family. Half of my Father's family was located in Vienna and we started to hear about their problems. My cousin Ernst, who was studying law, was arrested and was sent to Buchenwald, a concentration camp in Germany. No good reason was given --- it was just that he was a Jew. The German government established many such concentration camps. These camps were actually prisons which the Germans used to jail "the enemies of

the Third Reich." In these camps the prisoners were subjected to very harsh treatment and many died from overwork, disease, beatings, suicide or starvation. Later, the Germans built other camps where the conditions were much worse.

Pressure mounted on my uncles and their families. Uncle Joseph, Max and Samuel (Sammy) who were attorney, were told that they could no longer have non-Jews for clients. Uncle Joseph was also arrested and uncle Max was publicly humiliated. Uncle Victor, who had a jewelry store, had a Star of David painted on his window and non-Jews were told not to buy from him. And uncle Isidor, this wonderful dedicated doctor and humanitarian, was told that from now on he could only treat Jews. The families were talking about leaving Vienna.

It was also in 1937 when my parents decided to send my brother Harold to Switzerland to study. About that time my cousin Harry, the son of uncle David, was sent to England to study. Harry's older brother, Robert, who had returned from California after completing his degree in agriculture, left for Palestine. My uncle Alfred arrived from Palestine, married his niece Ella Reiniger, a daughter of aunt Sara and uncle Isidor Reiniger, urged the family to make plans to leave Europe and returned to Palestine. From there he would send documents, money and instructions that enabled many of the Ticho family members to leave Vienna and make their way to Palestine. Things seemed to be coming apart.

Our school population started to change. Friends, with whom I had grown up and gone to school with since kindergarten, were suddenly gone. Some were going to Palestine, but many were departing for places I had heard about only in my geography lessons. I took my atlas and looked up Cuba, Shanghai, Uruguay, South Africa, Australia, Costa Rica, India, Australia and many other strange sounding places. Some just kind of disappeared. One day they were in school and the next day they were no longer students in the

school. It was sad seeing so many friends leaving. At the same time, new students were arriving at the school. These were from families who fled to Czechoslovakia running away from Germany, Austria and other countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia.

A new crowd of people were now seen on the streets of Brno. These were groups of young men dressed up in white shirts, short leather pants and white stockings. They would march through the streets singing German songs and carrying a flag different from the Czechoslovak flag. Gangs of these people would wait for our school day to end and follow some of us from school. They would call us dirty names and occasionally chase us and beat us up when they caught us. We learned to keep our eyes open and walk to and from school through small back streets. Sometimes some of the older boys in our schools would send a few of us little kids ahead and wait till we were attacked. Then they would show up and beat up on the guys picking on us. These rebels were part of the German ethnic party lead by a Sudeten German, Henlein. The Sudetenland was a part of Czechoslovakia that bordered on Germany and many ethnic Germans lived in that part of the country. For twenty years, under the democratic rule of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia, these Sudeten Germans, along with the other ethnic minorities in the country, enjoyed full freedom to go to German schools, enjoy German theater, read German newspapers and books, have their own sports organizations and political representation. Henlein insisted that they were nevertheless a "persecuted" minority and was now agitating to get that a part of Czechoslovakia to join Germany.

In 1938 our family in Vienna was slowly disappearing. Uncle Max, Joseph, Sammy and their families left for Palestine. Uncle Victor came through Brno on his way to France. Uncle Isidor and aunt Sara came to Brno and moved in with one of our uncles. My cousin Trude, Joseph's daughter, went to Israel and then to Bombay, India where

she stayed for over eight years. Jacob's son Otto and family departed for Palestine. Cousin Anna Kolari (Reiniger) and family left for Montevideo, Uruguay and uncle David's daughter, Lisa Weiss, left for Australia. Other older first cousins scattered to other parts of the world. By now I was very disturbed and concerned.

Our summer vacation this year was quite different from the previous years. In 1938 we went to Italy to Cortina deAmpezzo. sorts in the world. In the summer it was a breathtaking resort. Harold joined us from Switzerland and we spent a great two months hiking and sightseeing. Our governess, Gusti Miksch, was with us and she taught us several German and Italian marching songs which we sang as we went exploring the many trails that were marked in the valley. For a little while we forgot what had been troubling us back home in Brno. But then a strange thing happened. When the school vacation ended, we did not return home. Instead we left for Zurich, Switzerland. We stayed there for about six weeks awaiting political developments in Europe and in Czechoslovakia. What to do? Was it safe to return to Czechoslovakia, or should we remain in Switzerland or leave for another country? We learned that the Swiss authorities would not let us stay. If we left for Palestine or some other country our family would loose all our possessions in Czechoslovakia. The pressure on my parents must have been terrific. In mid October 1938 our parents decided that it might be safe for us to return to Brno..

I got back into school, my second year gymnasium, a little late and had to do some catching up. My parents hired a tutor who helped me. Even with his help, it was difficult to concentrate, there were so many things going on. I was eleven years old and I was no longer kept in the dark as to what was happening. We heard many reports of Jews who were abused right in our own country by the German gangs. This was happening particularly in the North-Western part of Czechoslovakia which bordered on Germany and where

many ethnic German people lived. Hitler demanded that these areas be surrendered to Germany. There was great excitement and people expected that a war between Germany and Czechoslovakia may start at any time. We learned about poison gasses in school and started to prepare air raid shelters at the house. Gas masks were handed out to the citizens and we learned to use them. It was all very frightening. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the Czechs managed to maintain their usual wry sense of humor. The initials CPO started appearing in many places. The letters stood for "Civilni Protiletecka Obrana" (Civilian Air Raid Defense) and now were seen on shelter doors, helmets of wardens, emergency cars, first aid kits, poison gas clinics etc. Among the Czechs rumors claimed the CPO really stands for "Co Plasite Obcany?" (Why are you panicking the citizens?")

In November of 1938 several Jewish organizations staged a special event in one of the theaters in Brno. Each group performed for an audience made up mostly of parents of the children. Some groups put on skits, some sang Zionist songs, some danced Jewish Folk dances, some demonstrated gymnastics etc. etc. It was supposed to be a fun evening. Everything was going very well. Our group, the "Barak Kvuzah" of the Zionist youth organization Techelet Lavan, had performed a skit how life will be when we get to Palestine. Then there was an intermission. First there was an unusual murmur in the crowd, which grew and grew and became some very excited conversations. The show did not resume after the intermission. My Mother and Father surprised me backstage and told me to get dressed. "We are going home, and hurry." A few days earlier a Jewish refugee in Paris had fired shots at an official at the German Embassy. This evening, which became known as the Kristallnacht (The night of the broken glass), Nazi gangs throughout Germany staged anti-Jewish demonstrations destroying Jewish property, arresting tens of thousand Jews, burning temples and attacking Jews on the street. Word about these attacks reached our gathering in Brno along with rumors that gangs of anti-semites

were also roaming through our town staging similar attacks. The second half of the performance was canceled and all of us rushed for the safety of our homes.

Father was now making many trips to foreign countries like Switzerland and Sweden. Years later he told me what he was trying to do. He was selling merchandise cheaply to stores in those countries and depositing the money outside Czechoslovakia so that we might have some money in neutral countries in case of emergencies. This was not legal and the Czech authorities started investigating what was going on. For a while it looked like Father might get into real trouble. On one occasion, early in the morning, investigators suddenly arrived at the apartment. Father was carrying a key chain with keys to safe deposit boxes in foreign countries. If the investigators were to find these keys, he would be arrested. Father told them that Mother was not feeling well and was still in bed and he wanted to make sure she would not be frightened with strangers in the house. He opened the bedroom door and quickly threw the keys to Mother who stuck them into her brassiere. The investigators did not find anything suspicious and left Father alone. Later we, unfortunately, learned that even these plans did not work out quite the way Father had hoped.

When war between Germany and Czechoslovakia seemed inevitable, prime minister Neville Chamberlain of England and Eduard Daladier, the prime minister of France, went to Munich, Germany and met with Adolf Hitler and the dictator of Italy, Benito Mussolini, and signed the infamous Munich Pact. Without even consulting the leaders of Czechoslovakia, they decided that, in order to prevent war, Czechoslovakia would give up the Sudetenland, the portion of its country where most of the German nationals lived. Like greedy vultures, Poland, Rumania and Hungary now also demanded pieces of Czechoslovakia where some of their nationals lived. A strange looking map of our country was now introduced in our school. Gone was the familiar snake-like shape of Czechoslovakia. It was

replaced by one that looked like someone had taken bites from all around the country. People hoped that this was a solution to the political problems and that some semblance of normalcy would return. However, our family decided to make new preparations just in case things did not work out.

With so many uncertainties all around us, it was now decided that Mother would go to the United States in order to regain her United States of America citizenship which she had lost when she married my Father. This process required that Mother would have to be a resident of the United States for at least three months. On February 12, 1939 Mother left for Chicago leaving us in the care of our "faithful" governess, Gusti Miksch. She arrived in the United States twelve days later. Most of the Klein family was living in Chicago. Uncles Max, Ernest, Julius and William as well as aunts Paula and Mammie welcomed Mother to her birthplace after over 40 years. My brother Harold, also packed his bags in Switzerland and joined the family in Chicago. Our own small family was starting to fall apart.

The next few months were notable for their many unusual events. If Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Daladier had thought that Hitler's ambitions would be satisfied with just a portion of Czechoslovakia they were very much mistaken. Germany continued the pressure on our little country claiming that the few Germans still in Czechoslovakia were being mistreated. Gangs of Germans roamed the streets making all kinds of trouble. They kept demanding more and more special rights and privileges and the Czech authorities kept giving in. With our Mother thousands of miles away, Steven and I were pretty much under the control of our governess. For Father this must have been a most difficult time.

A few years earlier I had joined a Zionist Youth Organization, Techelet/Lavan (which means blue and white --- like the flag of Israel), and enthusiastically participated in their program. Our

Kvuzah Barak (Lightning Club) went on hikes and overnight trips, participated in all kinds of athletic programs and learned about Palestine and about building a new Jewish homeland in that area. The organization sent messenger from Palestine to tell us what was going on there, how the Jewish community was growing and fighting both the British and the Arabs to create a home for Jews from all over the world. I was very much interested in what these men had to tell us. For many years I had felt that there was something very important missing in my life. The Czechs could point to their own country and claim "This is mine!". The Italians had their country, the French had theirs, the Russians had theirs. It seemed that every ethnic group had their own country, but I could not point to any country as mine. For many years I felt that I was a Czech and was very proud to count myself as a Czech. But now, slowly, I was beginning to realize that I was really only a tolerated stranger in my own country. It didn't matter that I had been born in Czechoslovakia, that I spoke Czech, went to Czech schools and that I was a loyal Czech citizen. In the eyes of the non-Jews I wasn't really a Czech --- I was a Jew. Therefore, the idea that some day Jews may have their own country, became a burning issue with me. However, I never believed that I might actually live to see this dream become reality.

One evening, after a camp fire meeting, the "Shaliach" from Palestine asked for volunteers who are ready and want to go to Palestine. I was twelve years old and the decision seemed insurmountable. I mentioned the idea to Father. With my Mother and brother in the United States, Father did not want to split the family any further by sending me to Palestine. So, the idea was dropped. Little did I suspect in those difficult days that some 55 years later my wish and dream would come true and I would become a citizen of my own Jewish State, Israel.

The first few months of 1939 found Central Europe in ever greater turmoil. President Eduard Benes, who succeeded Thomas Masaryk as

president of Czechoslovakia, announced on the radio that "....conditions may be serious. but I have a plan." A few days later we learned that he had flown to England. In typical fashion, Czechs could see the humor in this and made a bitter joke saying: "Sure, he had a plan --- an airplane." General Sirovy, the stern looking one-eyed commander of the Czech Army, took over the presidency and once again the country was preparing for war. Czechoslovakia stood alone. Its "friends", Great Britain, France and Russia looked the other way. Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Rumania had formed a "Little Entente" which had sworn to come to the assistance of any of the three which was in danger. As school children we had cheered and waved flags when the king of Rumania and the regent of Yugoslavia visited Brno. Now we learned that this pact was not worth the paper it was written on. By March the situation looked hopeless. Soon Neville Chamberlain resigned and was replaced by Winston Churchill. Prime Minister Daladier was also removed from office.

Today I can imagine what a tremendously difficult problem it must have been for Father to decide whether to pack a few suit cases and abandon everything he had built up over the years or stay and hope that, somehow, things will improve. At that time, however, I could not understand what Father was waiting for. In my eyes the danger was clear and the solution was simple. Get out! It was easy for me to feel that way. I did not have to worry about the future of a family and its survival.

One night, in mid-March 1939, my brother Steven and I were wakened and told to get dressed quickly. We did so as fast as we could and, together with Father and a couple of suitcases, headed for the train station. We boarded the night train to Prag. We arrived in Prag just as the dawn was breaking. Father now tried to get tickets to anywhere outside Czechoslovakia. There was a great deal of confusion. Nobody seemed to know exactly what trains were running and when. All kinds of rumors were flying. The Germans

were coming --- the Germans are not coming --- there is fighting in Pilsen --- you can take a train to Vienna --- no trains are leaving --- you can escape by driving to Poland --- there is a bus that can take you to Vienna --- the Hungarians have invaded Slovakia --- the confusion was total. Father finally bought tickets for a train to Switzerland. We weren't sure whether it will actually leave Prag, but it seemed like the best bet.

Father, Steven and I jumped into a taxi cab to take us to the station from which the train to Switzerland was supposed to depart. We never made it. In Central Europe, Czechoslovakia was one of the few countries where cars drove on the left side of the street like they still do in England. Why this was the case I really don't know. It might have been as a sign of solidarity and friendship with what, up till then, was Czechoslovakia's biggest "friend", Great Britain. In all the surrounding countries, including Germany, cars drove on the right side of the street. Some time during the taxi trip we were suddenly met, head on, by a truck. Our driver had just enough time to pull over out of the way by running up onto the sidewalk. Other vehicles behind us also scrambled to get out of the truck's way. The huge truck rumbled by us without even slowing down. He was followed by, what seemed like, hundreds of similar big trucks. For the next hour, or so, we sat there in the taxi cab as truck after truck passed by us --- driving on the right side of the road. The trucks had cannons attached to them and were loaded with fully armed soldiers, ammunition, and all the instruments of war. The soldiers sat stiffly in the trucks holding their rifles. They were all dressed, not in the familiar green of the Czech army, but in the unusual gray of the German Wehrmacht. The short history of independent Czechoslovakia had come to an end after only twenty one years of democratic rule.

On March 22, 1939 my Mother regained her American citizenship and headed back to Czechoslovakia. She arrived in Europe and stopped

in Switzerland and urged my Father to join her there with Steven and myself. But, of course, by then it was too late.

THE FLOOD

Our train to Switzerland had been canceled. All transportation to foreign countries had been suspended. We spent the balance of the day in Prague trying to find some other way out of the country but finally decided that it was hopeless. We boarded a slow train and returned to Brno and to a very uncertain future.

In the next few weeks conditions changed greatly. Russia occupied the eastern most province of Czechoslovakia, Sub-Carpathian Russia. Slovakia declared itself an independent state and established a pro-German government under a Catholic priest, Father Josef Tiso. The Germans renamed what was left of our country the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia". A puppet government was set up under Premier Hacha and a German "Protector" became the real power in Prague. Each day new rules and regulations were published: The Czech flag and all symbols of the republic must be destroyed --- the public assembly of more than four people is prohibited --- the official language of the country is German --- civilians must make room on streetcars for German soldiers --- train travel is allowed only by special permission --- all traffic on the roads will move on the right side --- resistance to German authorities is strictly prohibited --- etc. etc. The new regulations seemed endless and people would gather each day near billboards to read what new rules had been established.

Along with the new rules and regulations, the billboards would also carry notices of individuals who had violated one or another rule and described in detail the harsh manner in which they had been punished. "Farmer so-and-so in Prostějov was caught selling eggs on the black market. His chickens were confiscated and the farm was burned to the ground". "For making critical remarks about the German authorities Professor so-and-so was sentenced to five years at hard labor." "For failure to give his seat on a streetcar

to a German soldier, Mrs. so-and-so was arrested and given a one year jail term." "For listening to foreign short wave radio broadcasts, so-and-so was arrested and sentenced to three years at hard labor. His three neighbors were also sentenced each to one year terms for not reporting the violation." It seemed that each day brought new announcements of the severe manner in which infractions of rules were being punished. Soon these announcements took on an even more ominous tone: "For damaging German military property four residents of the village of so-and-so were shot." "A German soldier was attacked in the town of so-and-so. When the hoodlums who committed this crime did not surrender voluntarily, ten citizens of the town were selected and shot." "Weapons were discovered in the home of so-and-so. The whole family, including the children, occupying the apartment were shot."

At first the new German regulations applied to all citizens of the Protectorate. But soon new regulations started to appear that applied only to Jews. "Jewish doctors can only treat other Jews." "Jewish lawyers may not have non-Jews as clients." "Jews must turn in all their cameras and radios." "Jews are not allowed to attend public events such as theaters, athletic events, or movie houses." "All books written by Jews are banned. No music composed by a Jew may be played." "Non-Jews are not permitted to shop in Jewish-owned stores." "Jews are not allowed in parks, public baths, museums, libraries or universities." Each of these regulations carried its own harsh punishment and each day there were announcements of the unlucky souls who had somehow offended the German authorities and what penalty they had to pay.

At our school changes were also taking place. Jewish teachers were no longer allowed to teach at Czech or German schools and non-Jewish teachers were banned from our Jewish school. Professor Hrdlicka, our strict but wonderful physics teacher who was unique because he had lost a leg during World War I fighting for the Czech Legion and because he was the only non-Jewish teacher at our

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school, one day was gone. Several other professors who had left the country or had been arrested were missing. We were required to go through out text books and black out or cut out anything the German authorities found objectionable. We spent hours with black ink and scissors removing any traces of Czech history, the names of Czech leaders such as Masaryk, the fact that Germany had lost the first World War etc. etc. In addition any references to anything Jewish had to be removed including names of Jews or anything written by Jews. The Germans may have thought that this process would eliminate all traces of Jews from the studies. However, now our textbooks filled with so many blacked out sections and so many missing pages, only served to remind us what great and extensive contributions Jews had made to art, literature, science and the humanities.

The German authorities started arresting people. Most of the time no real reason was given. They were particularly harsh with intellectuals --- teachers, doctors, writers, editors, newspaper people, judges, lawyers, etc. and, of course, politicians. Jews were particularly singled out and we heard each day about this man or that man having been arrested. In some cases the individuals were released after lengthy questioning, but in many cases they did not return. On April 20th 1939, Steven's birthday (and also the birthday of the new Fuhrer of our land, Adolf Hitler) there was a knock on our apartment door and several members of the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) charged into our apartment. They searched the place for a couple of hours and left. After they departed an employee of Ticho Brothers, who had been waiting downstairs for the Gestapo to leave, came upstairs to tell us that the Gestapo had also been to the office and that Father had been arrested. His brother and partner in the business, Paul (Baruch) Ticho, had also been arrested.

The reason for the arrest was given that both had "been unfair to the workers in their business," This accusation was made by Hugo

the driver who had been in the employ of Uncle David and my Father for over eighteen years. Hugo drank too much and too often and was released by uncle David for that reason. Father decided to give him another chance and hired him. He worked for us for many years. Now, he turned out to be a Nazi and repaid Father for his favors by accusing him. This accusation was soon proven false. But, that really did not result in Father's release. The Gestapo simply came up with new accusations. Finally, it became obvious that the reason Father and uncle Baruch were arrested was that they were Jews.

The following day, April 21, 1939, my twelfth birthday, Steven and I found ourselves with both our parents and our older brother gone. Aunt Sara and uncle Isidor Reiniger had moved in with us a few months earlier and they, even though they were older folks, tried to maintain some order. However, the real power turned out to be our "faithful" governess Augusta Miksch. When the Gestapo arrived at our apartment she went to her room and came out with her blouse bedecked with all kinds of German buttons. It seems that, all along, she had been a member of the Nazi party and now, as a reward, the German authorities put her in charge of our whole building.

Aunt Gizela Rooz and her husband Moritz were kicked out of their apartment by the Gestapo and moved in with us. Steven and I continued to go to our school. Jews were now banned from parks and swimming pools so we had to give up our daily walks through the Augarten park which was only a few houses from our apartment. Jews were barred from public transportation --- which made going to school a challenge. Most of the time I got on the streetcar anyway but jumped off after we passed our school so that people would not suspect that I was going to a Jewish school.

The central part of Brno was dominated by two hills. One was topped by the city's cathedral, a very imposing red brick building

with two very tall spires. The other hill was called the Spielberg (which in German, rather ironically, means amusement hill). This hill was covered by a very pretty park with lots of walks, paths and benches and was topped by the Spielberg Fortress. One of the grammar school trips that each class took was a visit to this old fortress built in the Middle Ages. There were many very scary things to see during this visit that frightened us and gave us nightmares for days thereafter. In one part of the fortress we climbed down into a dungeon with many little cells where prisoners were locked up. There also was an adjoining torture chamber. Here a guide would describe, in greater detail than we wished, how prisoners used to be tortured. We learned about the rack where people were stretched till all their joints broke, the Iron Lady into which prisoners were forced while spikes pierced their body, the Iron Mask which would destroy a man's eyes, the "water torture" where a prisoner had drops of water fall on his head till he went insane and many others. The lecture was topped with a visit to the chopping block where prisoner's heads were cut off. Even today I still remember how frightened we all were and how glad we were when we reached daylight once again.

It was to this fortress that Father and uncle Paul were sent after they were arrested. Remembering the torture chambers, we were very concerned what fate awaited a prisoner on the Spielberg and imagined all kinds of horrors that our Father may be subjected to. Nothing that we imagined was as bad as what actually awaited Jews later under the Nazi regime. We heard very little from our Father. Every once in a while a prisoner, who had been released, would let us know that Father was alive, surviving. and getting along as best as he could. Our family kept going to the Gestapo offices to see what could be done to get Father and uncle Paul released. It was suggested that, if they would sign away their business, perhaps a release might be arranged. The Ticho Brothers business was signed over to the German authorities and a former salesman, who was a member of the Nazi party, was now made the boss of the

business. Unfortunately, this did not result in Father's release. We continued to wait and hope.

Now, when it was already too late, thousands of Jews were trying everything possible to leave the country. Once again rumors were flying from and to every direction: "You can buy a visa to go to the Dominican Republic for 1,000 pound sterling". "You can get a low number for an American Visa if you can prove that you are a Latvian." "There is a lawyer who can get you an exit permit to India if you are a doctor and can speak English." "The Krejcy family escaped by sneaking across the border to Poland." There was no shortage of hopes which, usually, were soon destroyed. The most prized visa was one to the United States. Unfortunately, the United States, like many other countries, were jealously protecting their borders from foreigners. The USA was using a quota system allowing only a certain number of people from each country to come to the United States every year. With so many Jews trying to escape, these quotas were filled to overflowing. When people, for example, applied for a number on the Polish quota, they were assigned one that was so high that it meant they would have to wait over ten years before their number would even come up. This was of little help to people that were in mortal danger right now! Still people hoped and kept on trying. Jews were running everywhere trying to get various official documents that they were told they had to have in order to get permission to leave or enter another country. The number of papers needed seemed endless --- your birth certificate, a residency certificate. marriage license, passport, your mothers death certificate, your father's birth certificate, a statement from the tax authorities that you don't owe any taxes, a statement from the police that you are not a criminal, three letters of recommendation testifying to your good character, your school records, copies of your diplomas, doctor's certificate that you don't suffer from any diseases and are in good health, death certificates, inventory of the possessions you will take with you, a list of your financial

resources, affidavits from people who will support you --- the list went on and on --- and each paper required other documents, days of anxious waiting and hours in long lines to see clerks who really did not care. Most often, the German authorities also required a document to show that you have renounced all your property, assets etc. and only possess one suitcase of clothing.

Some of our family members managed to get out. Aunt Irma, Father's youngest sister, left with her two sons, Kurt and Fritz (now Itzhak and Aron) for Palestine. The Rooz family left for the United States. My cousin Olga Schick (a daughter of Sara and Isidor Reiniger) and her husband Max departed for the United States with their children Fred, Liane and Tommy. Lisa Weiss (the daughter of uncle David) and her husband and daughter left for Australia. Suzy (Heinrich's daughter) and husband left for Palestine as did cousin Otto and his family. Unfortunately, many could not leave and were stuck in Brno. Uncle David and his wife, uncle Jacob and his wife, the wife and children of uncle Paul, Lilly Ticho, the other daughters of Uncle Heinrich, uncle and aunt Reiniger and, of course, my brother and I were all trapped in Brno. Of all those left in the grip of Nazis at the end of 1940 only cousin Lilly survived. All the rest were killed in the Holocaust.

With each day that passed it became ever so much harder to arrange the departure from the Protectorate. Pretty soon it became nearly impossible. Some people were lucky, often grasping at last straws, and managing to escape. Many years later, aunt Gizela told me the following story: During the time that she, her husband Moritz and uncle Isidor and aunt Sara Reiniger were staying at our apartment, uncle Paul's wife, Marie (Liderl), visited them on a Friday evening just as they were having dinner. She was very distraught. She had heard that: If she puts her oldest son, Karl, on a train this Saturday morning he might be able to escape. The Zionist Youth Aliyah people are supposed to have arranged for a train

which would take a group of Jewish children out of the country and to Palestine. With her husband in a German concentration camp she was looking for advice from the two older men as to what to do. Should she dare to put this thirteen-year-old boy alone on a train which may or may not get him to safety? Would it be safer to keep him near? Will she ever see him again? The questions and options were heartwrenching. Uncle Isidor, who was a very religious man said: "This is not possible. Tomorrow is the Sabbath, and you are not allowed to travel." "But Dr. Reiniger," said uncle Moritz, who was at least equally as religious but more practical, "this is a matter of life and death. Jewish law permits you to violate the Sabbath to save a life. You can travel on the Sabbath under those circumstances." "So, do what you wish!" said uncle Isidor curtly and left the room. Uncle Moritz turned to the confused and bewildered woman and said: "Put your son on the train." The next morning aunt Liderl kissed her son good bye. He and a group of about forty youngsters boarded the train. His mother, his younger brother Frantisek and his little sister Renatka waived as the train left the station and disappeared in the distance. They never saw each other again. And that is how Karl Ticho became the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust.

One day Steven and I were told to get dressed very nicely and that we were going to see our Father. We did as we were told and sat in our room, all dressed up, waiting for something to happen. Suddenly there was a great deal of commotion in front of our building. Five or six German army cars pulled up with lots of officers in very fancy uniforms. We heard many voices and loud footsteps in the other parts of our apartment. Then, a black car arrived and we could see what looked like Father being escorted into the building by a group of Gestapo men. He was dressed in a light blue prisoner's uniform and his head was shaved and his hands were tied. The Gestapo men wore black leather coats. We waited for another half hour or so. Then our governess came in and told us we should follow her to the salon and see our Father. When

we entered the salon I saw a strange sight. At the large table in the center of the room sat a high ranking German general with a group of other officers standing in back of him. On the other side sat Father. He had changed so much! Gone was what little hair he had. Gone was his moustache and he had lost a lot of weight. Strangely, he looked younger than how I had remembered him.

I don't remember what was said or what we did. It was all very strange and confusing. The meeting was very brief and we were hustled out of the room. Later we learned that Father had been forced to sign over the apartment to the German General and that we would have to move to a smaller apartment upstairs. General Braunau von Trillingen, the commander of the German army garrison in the area, was now the occupant of our apartment. Much of the furniture remained in the apartment and the rest was packed in 67 crates and was stored in a warehouse. Later, we learned that all the crates were seized by the authorities for non-payment of storage fees. All our belongings disappeared. General von Trillingen, we later learned was killed on the Russian front.

The summer of 1939 came and there still was no news regarding Father's possible release. Mother would write us regularly from Switzerland asking us to be good boys and expressing the hope to see us soon. Her letters were full of praise for our governess --- calling her loyal, dependable, honest, responsible, caring etc. etc.--- We hated to hear all this praise and wondered whether Mother had any idea what a witch her "wonderful" governess had turned out to be. What we did not realize at that time was, that Mother's praise was, most likely, her desperate way of trying to ensure our well-being and to assure that Miss Miksch would not cause us any harm. Mother's letters would also contain news of what is being done to obtain Father's release. Unfortunately, most of the time, these efforts ended in failure.

It was decided that Steven and I would spend the 1939 summer vacation in Luhacovice with my cousins Frantisek and Renatka (Baruch's children). Frantisek was a couple of years younger than I, but was in many ways much tougher and self assured. One did not mess with Frantisek. He was always ready to defend his honor. He also was very good in sports and did not seem frightened of anything. He was always the first to climb over a fence, to jump over an obstacle or to lead when leadership was needed. I always had a lot of respect for him and a little fear.

I don't remember too much about this summer except one incident in which Frantisek and I got into a rock throwing fight with a large group of Czech kids who called us dirty names. Frantisek, true to his style, would not take this without a fight. Fortunately, the fight took place on a slope with us holding the high ground and a distinct advantage. The rock throwing went on for a while when, suddenly, one of Frantisek's rocks found the head of one of the boys at the bottom of the hill. His head promptly started bleeding rather profusely. The injured boy started to cry and ran off. The rest of the boys also retreated. "We won!" I rejoiced at the victory but, to my great shock, Frantisek burst into tears and ran for home. For the first time I realized that, under his tough exterior, there still was a small boy.

With the end of summer in 1939 we returned to school and found, once again, great changes had taken place. More students and more professors were gone. I was shocked to learn who some of my professors were. Dr. Drachmann, the director of the school was now my Hebrew professor. For the past two school years Dr. Drachmann was someone who we, in the lower classes, only saw during national holiday celebrations or if one of us had gotten into some really bad trouble. Otherwise he had been virtually invisible to us --- only someone whose signature appeared on our report cards. Now, here he was --- just an ordinary professor --- and teaching a lower class! Then there was Professor Bock who taught advanced

mathematics to the top grades in the school. This year he was our singing teacher! Such strange and unusual happenings! Actually, these were desperate maneuverings of the school's administrators who were trying to keep a semblance of stability under some very difficult circumstances. What they probably did not suspect was that, despite of their best efforts, this would, in fact, be the last year of the school's existence.

For a while we lived in a small apartment on the third floor of what used to be our building and now belonged to the German authorities. Then, one day, a group of Gestapo men came and told us that we had 24 hours to move. Uncle Isidor and aunt Sara went to live with uncle David and Steven and I took our few possessions (we could only each take one suitcase) to uncle Jacob and his wife Emma. Uncle Jacob was the oldest of the eleven Ticho brothers that were sandwiched in between the two sisters, Sara the oldest and Irma the youngest. He was a small man, perhaps no more than five feet high, and suffered from a severe case of diabetes. In the past, he had always been a person with whom I've had very little contact. Now, that we were living in his apartment, I found it difficult to relate to him. We spoke very little, ate our meals alone in the kitchen and saw him only on rare occasions. Aunt Emma, on the other hand, was a warm and caring woman who did her best to make us feel at home. Their three grown children, Wilma, Otto and Fritzi had already emigrated to Palestine before the Nazi invasion, so there was a little extra room in their apartment we could use. Only now I can appreciate what a burden it must have been for these two older folks to suddenly have two young boys to care for.

On September 1st 1939 the German army invaded Poland. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany and World War II had started. Russia invaded Poland from the East and occupied the Eastern part of the country. It took Germany less than three weeks to conquer the Western half of Poland. It then turned its

attention to the West and conquered Denmark, Belgium, and Holland in quick order and started its invasion of France. Germany also turned North and invaded Norway. Each of these conquests were marked with great celebrations, parades, flag displays and the playing of German war songs on the radio. A number of British war ships were sunk and each victory was another cause for celebrations. We cringed at each of these occasions. Was there anyone or anything that will stop Hitler?

Shortly after the start of 1940 we got some very bad news. Father and uncle Paul had been sent to the Dachau Concentration camp in Germany. Concentration camps were really prison camps in which the Germans were "concentrating" the enemies of the Third Reich (which is how the Nazis referred to their expanded country.) Jews, of course, were considered the most "dangerous" enemies of the country and were allowed the fewest privileges, did the hardest work, and lived under the worst conditions. Many prisoners died from lack of food, overwork, beatings from guards or suicides. While the conditions at Dachau for Jewish prisoners was pretty miserable, they were nothing compared to the concentrations camps the Germans set up later in Eastern Europe in which millions of Jews were gassed and cremated. Nonetheless we were very upset by the news of the move to Dachau. Now the situation looked a lot worse.

April 21st 1940 was approaching and preparations were supposed to start for my Bar Mitzvah. The large temple in Brno was burned down by the Nazis. The small temple, where our family worshipped and where I had sung in the choir, was closed. A new temple had been built in the mid-thirties and was called, for reasons I am not sure of, the Polish Temple. We learned that services were still held at this temple and preparations were made for me to have my *Bar Mitzvah* there. Uncle Isidor undertook the task of preparing me for the reading of the blessings and the *Haftorah*. The Bar Mitzvah was scheduled for Saturday, April 22. The *Totah* reading for that

day was *Mishpatim*. After school, I'd take my *Chumash* and *Kippa* and headed for uncle David's apartment and my lesson with uncle Isidor.

Uncle Isidor had always been a very imposing figure for me. I saw him occasionally when I was a small boy since I would sleep in his apartment whenever I came to Vienna. Still I did not really have a chance to get to know him well. He was perhaps six feet tall, had a short beard and always wore a hat --- which made him look even taller. He was, apparently, a great humanitarian besides being a very good doctor. He believed that a doctor's task, first and foremost, was to alleviate suffering --- even if the patient could not afford his fee. Further, he considered circumcising a Jewish baby an honor, a *mitzvah*, and did not charge for this ceremony and his services. It was no big surprise, therefore, that he was kept very busy and that people often took advantage of him. As a result, his large family (he had eight children) was often short of money.

Now in 1940 in Brno he was no longer allowed to practice medicine. Nevertheless, one day a doctor came over to see him. It seems that there was a Jewish boy that was to be circumcised (something the Germans had already prohibited) and this doctor had never done this procedure before. The two doctors sat down and Uncle Isidor explained the ceremony and the procedure to him. Then he loaned the doctor his surgical instruments. I took a look at the little wooden box in which the instruments were stored and noticed that there was a small engraved plaque mounted on the box stating that "This set of instruments was presented to Dr. Isidor Reiniger by the grateful Jewish Community of Vienna on the occasion of his 20,000th circumcision".

Now a new chapter in my relationship with this unusual man began. During the many weeks of my lessons he and I became very close. Uncle Isidor was a great story teller and raconteur and we spent

many hours together while he told me of his experiences and background. Uncle Isidor was in his seventies but, to a thirteen year old boy like me, he seemed much older. I really looked forward to each meeting even though uncle Isidor was very strict and would get very upset if I had not done my homework. The lessons went on and I was doing pretty well. However, as the Bar Mitzvah date neared, uncle Jacob and uncle David decided that, with my father in the Dachau Concentration Camp, my Mother trapped in Switzerland and with the current serious and dangerous conditions, it wasn't a good idea to draw attention to the Ticho family by a Bar Mitzvah in the Polish Temple. The idea that I would have my Bar Mitzvah was scrapped and, on the Saturday when I should have been reciting my Haftorah, I wasn't even in a temple. I had been looking forward to this event for many years and was bitterly disappointed when it was canceled. I was prepared for the fact that I could not have an elaborate Bar Mitzvah celebration like my older brother Harold had, but I had hoped that I would at least get called up to the Torah.

Before dawn the following Sunday morning there was a knock on our apartment door. This was cause for immediate panic. Early morning was the Gestapo's favorite time to come calling. We prepared for the worst as we opened the door and breathed a sigh of relief when we saw that it was uncle Isidor. "Get dressed quickly", he said to me. A few minutes later, with his hand firmly holding mine, we left the apartment and started walking through the early morning deserted streets of our town. We did not speak and I had no idea where we were going. I knew, however, that we were violating German rules by breaking the curfew which prohibited Jews to be outside before sunrise. I was frightened. The sun was just starting to rise when we arrived at a small building on the Krenova Ulice. We went to the rear of the house and down a few steps and entered a small room. Inside the dimly lit room I could discern a dozen or so men, wrapped in their *talith*, wearing their *tfillim* and already deeply engrossed in the morning prayer. Uncle

Isidor opened a brown paper bag and brought out two sets of tfillim and we joined in this ancient ritual.

The large temple in Brno had an organ that was played during services. Many members of the Jewish community were not pleased with this addition to the services. They considered it too close to a church service and, besides, you should not play an instrument on a Sabbath --- not even in the service of God. The small temple in Brno had a choir instead. The choir consisted of a small group of young boys and four men. The boys sang soprano and alto parts and the men were the tenors and basses. When I was about nine years old I tried out for the choir and was accepted. I had an excellent ear and a good strong voice. The cantor of the synagogue, whom we only knew as Cantor Ast, rehearsed us twice a week and conducted the services on Friday evening, Saturday morning and, of course, on all holidays. Cantor ----- Ast was a little man with a great tenor voice and a very pleasant personality. He treated the boys in the choir with great respect and dignity always calling us by our last names. We would arrive early for each service at the back door of the temple. There was a room on each side of the front of the temple. On one side the rabbi and the cantor would get dressed. The other side held the black robes of the choir. We would don our robes and black scull caps and enter the temple waiting for the services to start. Sometimes we would accompany cantor Ast as he sang the liturgy. At other times the choir would sing a portion of the service. Then there were the special occasions, usually on holidays, where a member of the choir would get a chance to sing a solo. After a year or so in the choir, the solo soprano parts were usually assigned to me. I was very proud to be selected in this manner.

Our temple was called "the small temple" only because it was somewhat smaller than the "large temple". Actually, our temple was quite large and probably accommodated over 400 people. It had a balcony on three sides where the women were seated. (our temple

did not allow women and men to sit together during services). At one end of the temple was a raised platform with a few steps on each side. A brass railing surrounded this area. In front of the railing was a long bench on which the choir sat. In the center was the reading table where Cantor Ast would conduct the services. Two large brass *Menorahs* were part of the railing as well as a dais from which the rabbi would preach. In the back of this platform was the *Aron Kodesh*, covered by a beautifully embroidered drape, in which the *Torah scrolls* were kept. Above the *Aron Kodesh* hung a silver lantern on a long chain that reached all the way to the ceiling. The eternal flame always flickered inside this lantern. I often wondered how this was possible since I never saw anyone refilling it with oil. Above the altar was a tall arch, reaching almost to the high ceiling, on which a portion of the scripture was painted in large black Hebrew letters. And all this splendor was presided over by little Cantor Ast bedecked in his black robe, dome-shaped black hat and beautiful silver embroidered *talith*.

I had been away from the little temple for almost a year since the day it was closed by the Nazis. Now, in this small prayer room in the basement of a house, I was surprised to discern the familiar voice of Cantor Ast, intoning the familiar liturgy from somewhere in the front of the dimly lit tiny room that was serving a few dedicated Jews as their house of worship. For just a while I imagined I was back at the little temple singing with the choir. From the back of the room, hidden from Cantor Ast by the men in front of me, I sang my part as in the old days. When the Torah reading started, I was sent to the front where, for the first time, my eyes met Cantor Ast's. He smiled at me briefly and then proceeded to sing the regular Bar Mitzvah liturgy --- the same that I had heard him sing so often in our glorious little temple for other boys. I was deeply touched by this gesture and when it came time for me to recite the blessings, my voice broke several times.

I did not have a Bar Mitzvah in a large temple, I did not get to read my haftorah and I did not have my family surrounding me on this important occasion, but in that small room, with Cantor Ast next to me and surrounded by a few Jews who were willing to risk their lives to attend morning services, I felt like I was having the greatest Bar Mitzvah possible.

By seven thirty the services were finished and uncle Isidor and I were heading back. Uncle David gave me a wristwatch as a Bar Mitzvah present and Uncle Jacob gave me a fountain pen. Uncle Isidor wrote out a blessing on a small piece of paper in his tiny and very precise script and read it to me very solemnly before he handed it to me. Aunt Emma gave me a kiss and had managed somehow to find a piece of chocolate to give me as a present.

Germany had successfully invaded France, had occupied Paris and was now bombing London. Each day we heard reports of the number of bombs that had been dropped and the number of British airplanes the Germans had shot down. In the South, Italy, which had joined Germany to form the Axis Powers, was fighting in the Balkans having conquered Albania and invaded Greece. In Africa, the Italian Army and the German Africa Corps was moving East towards Egypt. The news from most fronts was very grim. In the Protectorate strict rationing was in force. You needed ration cards for almost everything --- meat, butter, flour, sugar, clothing, gasoline, coal --- and there were strict rules about who and when you could travel. More new rules were issued regularly only pertaining to Jews --- Jews were not allowed to have a telephone -- Jews can no longer own land -- Jews must turn in all their cars, typewriters, sewing machines --- all male Jews must add the middle name Israel to their names and all female Jews must add the name of Sara --- etc.etc. After each new rule the Jewish community made the needed adjustment and tried to live under whatever new restriction had been just introduced. No sympathy or resistance was generated by the Czech population. Some Czechs

turned out to be Nazis, others took advantage of the situation and joined the Czech Nazi auxiliaries and the rest just went sullenly about their daily business pretending that their life was almost normal. For Jews it was a daily struggle to find food, work and, often, a place to live.

We heard rumors that the Germans had established a special concentration camp for Czech Jews in a small town called Theresienstadt. We also got word of ghettos being formed in most Polish cities and that Jews were forced to live in these walled in areas. Occasionally, we would also hear of this man or this woman who had died while in the concentration camps. One day the bad news hit home. We learned that uncle Paul had died in Dachau. The death certificate stated that he had died of "natural causes". However, Father some time later told me that a guard had hit uncle Paul in the head with his rifle butt when uncle Paul failed to bend down fast enough to pick something up from the ground. Since Jews were not allowed any medical services in the camp, uncle Paul died of his injury a few days later. The Germans cremated his body and a few days later a box, supposedly containing his ashes, arrived. Our concern for Father's safety now reached the desperate stage.

One of the few things that stayed more or less constant was our small group of boys and girls who formed our "Kvuzah Barak" in the Techelet/Lavan organization. Our leader, our "madrich", kept us together and we would conduct various activities even though they were no longer permitted. He kept telling us that, some day, we will get to Palestine and should be prepared to build this new Jewish homeland. We learned Hebrew songs and dances and read about the history of Jews. As summer 1940 approached, our madrich told us that we should learn to become farmers by working the fields. He asked us to volunteer to spend our summer on a farm. I approached uncle Jacob with this idea and was surprised that he quickly agreed and even handed me some money in case I needed it.

He thought it would be a good idea for me to leave Brno and the idea of hiding on a farm appealed to him. Steven was sent to spend the summer with a former maid of ours and I packed a few things and took a train to Prostějov. There I met up with four more boys and five girls. We walked for almost a day, following the instructions we had received from our madrich, and reached the small village where two farmers were willing to put us up. The girls stayed at one of the farms and the boys at another. The arrangement at the farms was very simple. We worked six days each week, in turn, we received three meals a day and a place to sleep. On Sunday we rested, but we were not allowed to go into the village. We spent Sunday talking, playing chess or other games, or reading. I never learned whether the farmers really had sympathy for Jews, or whether this was a way for them to get cheap labor or whether they were actually paid to hide us. We really did not care. The work was not too hard and we were good friends and got along very well with the farmer and his family. We were away from school, professors, parents and other obligations and feeling pretty free and independent. And among this group of thirteen and fourteen year old youngsters there also was a spark of romance in the air. Much of what was going on around us was, for a very short time, almost forgotten. Then, one day late in August, I received a postcard from Uncle Jacob asking me to come immediately back to Brno.

THE RESCUE

When you look at the city of Chicago today it is hard to believe that this great metropolis was incorporated less than 200 years ago. Two explorers, Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet first explored the area in 1673. The area was known to explorers for more than one hundred years before the first trading post was established there by Point du Sable. In the early 19th century it was still nothing but a trading post with a fort to protect the settlers that were heading West. For a while Fort Dearborn, which was built in 1803, stood in the midst of a smelly swamp where a river flowed into the large lake which is now known as Lake Michigan. Much of the smell came from the wild onions that grew around the area. The name Chicago, it is believed, is derived from an Indian word meaning onion. Then, one day, during the War of 1812, the Indians threatened to attack. The few inhabitants of the Fort decided to retreat. While they were exposed in the open, they were attacked and all killed.

Fort Dearborn was burned to the ground and stood empty for several years before some new settlers arrived. However, the lake and the rivers around the area made traveling comparatively easy. Explorers, traders and hunters frequented the area. Nevertheless, Fort Dearborn was not rebuilt till 1816. But after that, the growth of the city was phenomenal. Chicago was incorporated as a village in 1833 and as a city in 1836. Soon railroads from all directions arrived and, by 1860, Chicago became the main railroad center of the fast growing nation. Just when everyone thought that there was no way to stop the progress, disaster struck.

In 1871 a major part of the whole city burned to the ground. Hundreds of people died and thousands of homes were destroyed. Out of the ashes quickly grew an even larger, more vibrant and more ambitious city. By the time the 20th century arrived, Chicago's population exceeded one million. Chicago had much to be proud of and, therefore, in 1933 it decided to celebrate the city's centennial, with a great World's Fair that was staged on the Lake Michigan waterfront. Called "A Century of Progress" the fair dramatized not only the advances that had taken place in Chicago,

but also the progress that the whole world had achieved in the past and can look forward to in the future. It was a most ambitious project and the city and its citizens had great expectations of its world wide success.

Unfortunately, one of the things that the planners of the fair did not anticipate was that the Great Depression would be at its height just when the fair's door were supposed to open. The world-wide depression in the economies of nearly every country, devastated the lives of many families. A huge portion of the workers were unemployed or working for very low wages. Times were really tough on everyone. The fair was well received, but fewer people than expected were willing to spend their hard earned money on such entertainment.

The promoters of the fair tried various promotions to get people into the fairgrounds. One such public relations ploy was to appeal to the potential audience's ethnic background. Certain days, weeks or even months were selected and designated "something-American". So, there was a German-American Week, a Greek-American Week, a Irish-American Month etc. etc. For each of these events special promotions were planned that appealed to the featured national group. It was within this ethnically centered programs that an Italian-American Month was declared. The highlight of this promotion was the arrival from overseas of a small fleet of Italian military aircraft. Remember, in 1933 flying across the Atlantic was still quite an adventure. It was only six years earlier that Charles Lindbergh had electrified the world with his solo flight between the United States and Paris. So, when it was announced that a group of planes from Italy were going to fly across the Atlantic to come to the Chicago Fair, a great deal of excitement was generated.

The commander of this group of airplanes was an officer in the Italian Air Force named Italo Balbo. When the planes arrived in Chicago they were grandly welcomed by a large and festive celebration and a parkway on the Chicago waterfront was renamed Balbo Drive. Since this was a military matter, it was appropriate that the welcome be lead by the highest ranking military man in

Chicago. That, it turned out, was the commander of the 33rd Division of the Illinois National Guard, General Keehn. He in turn selected his Aide-de-Camp, Captain Julius Klein, as the personal aide to General Balbo. This is how General Balbo befriended Julius Klein, my Mother's brother --- my uncle. Captain Julius Klein was a newspaper reporter who, in addition, was very active in the local state militia. During World War II he would serve on General McArthur's staff in the Pacific and ultimately retire as a two-star general.

After Balbo returned to Italy the two colleagues lost touch. By 1940, the Italian general had become Generalissimo Balbo, the Governor of Libya, a colony in North Africa that the Italian Army had conquered. Julius Klein had also advanced in the army and had risen to the rank of colonel in the regular United States Army. This chance meeting and the untiring effort of my uncle and his brother, uncle Ernest L. Klein, saved our family's lives.

Of course, back in Brno we all were totally unaware of all these activities. All uncle Jacob learned from the German authorities one day was that Steven and I were to be granted exit permits and that Father was soon to be released from the Dachau Concentration Camp. It was at this point that Uncle Jacob sent me the urgent post card to return to Brno immediately. Steven arrived a few days later and preparations were started to arrange our trip. This was by no means a simple task. In order to get to the United States we had to cross several other countries. These countries wanted to be sure that we would not stay within their borders. So, before you could get a visa to enter one of the countries you had to have a visa to enter the next country. Our quest, therefore started with the United States.

Now, that our Mother was a United States citizen again, we no longer had to wait for our quota number to come up. Uncle Jacob gave us some documents and some money and Steven and I went to Prag to arrange for our American visas. I was thirteen years old at that time and Steven was nine. Nevertheless, the trip did not frighten us. We got permission from the German authorities to travel to Prag and went together by night train arriving early in

the morning. We then went to the American Consulate where we handed in our papers and the two of us sat for almost half a day. Finally, we were ushered into an office where a rather large man sat behind a big desk smoking one cigarette after the other. I was amazed at the wasteful manner in which he smoked. He would light a cigarette, take a few puffs and then discard it. Cigarettes were rationed and good quality cigarettes were very hard to find and very expensive. My eyes wondered over to the man's ash tray and I tried to count the number of very large cigarette butts in it. I wondered how much money I could earn selling these butts if I could just take them with me. I was certain the contents of the ashtray would have brought me a neat profit. The man asked us a few questions in German and kept looking at our papers and writing things down, We just sat there wondering whether we will succeed in getting this all-important document. Then suddenly everything was ready. A few signatures and a lot of rubber stamping later, and Steven and I were on the night train on our way back to Brno clutching our life line --- our American visas. It would be 55 years later before I would visit Prag again.

With our American visas at hand, we could now proceed with the other arrangements. Mother, in Switzerland, bought tickets for a boat ride from Lisbon, Portugal, to New York. With these tickets we could get a Portuguese visa. With the Portuguese visa we were able to get a Spanish visa. Mother then arranged for a visa to pass through Unoccupied France and Switzerland. The chain was now complete.

While this process was going on, Father arrived from Dachau. He was all skin and bones. The suit he had worn when he was arrested now hung on him like a grotesque clown suit. I don't remember much about our reunion. Father was staying with some other relatives (there was no more room at uncle Jacob's) and we were busy with travel preparations. We asked him some questions about his experiences, but his answers were very vague and evasive, It was obvious that he did not want to talk about his ordeal. Father was also busy trying to find out what was left of his possessions, seeing friends and relatives, delivering messages from other prisoners and making his own arrangements for departure. Under

these circumstances we did not get to see him very often or for long periods of time. Our German exit permit expired August 31, 1940. Father's exit permit was good for two more months. Our papers were all ready, but he still had a long way to go. It was, therefore, decided that Steven and I would leave first without our Father in order to be sure we got out before the expiration date of our exit visa. And so, on August 13th I said my last good byes to my friends and family and Steven and I boarded a train for Vienna and a new life. I expected never to see Brno ever again.

It is hard to describe how you feel when you are closing the door behind you on the only life you have known since birth. The tragedies and disasters that had befallen our family poisoned most of the love I had for my country and my city. When we were departing, the Nazis were at the crest of their success. It seemed to me that, when Hitler said that his Third Reich was going to last for one thousand years, he was probably right. Nothing seemed to stand in his way and, as long as the Nazis were in power, there was no place in Europe for a Jew. When I left Brno, I could not imagine that conditions would ever change to make a return to Brno possible. I was sad for all the people which I never expected to see again. My school friends, my neighborhood friends, my teachers, the friends from Techelet/Lavan and, of course, my family all were lost. I knew that I would not see them again. I also left behind the many pleasant memories of the fun and laughter we all shared and the special events that we all enjoyed together. But, mostly, my feelings were of great relief that our nightmare may just be ending. I felt a great anxiety to get out from under the Nazi boot. Unfortunately, most of my worst fears came true.

Steven had always been a quiet and obedient child. He and I got along very well together. Harold, who was six years older than I, was mostly off in a different world. When you are eight or ten years old, six additional years make a big difference. Harold was already going to the gymnasium before I even started grammar school. So, we traveled in different circles. In the apartment on Dolni Ulice, Harold had his own room while Steven, I and our governess shared another. As a result, Steven and I learned to

live with each other, playing games together, eating our meals together, listening to our governess read to us and spending our vacations together. When we were left alone during the Nazi period we grew even closer. We plotted against our governess together, had our own secrets and protected each other with an occasional necessary lie. Steven was nine years old when we left Brno. We've been together on our own for such a long time it never occurred to me that I should be concerned about traveling through a war torn continent along with my little brother. I wasn't concerned about getting lost, or loosing my luggage, tickets, passports, papers or my money or loosing my brother. My only worry was the constant unknown menace that being a Jew in a Nazi country represented. Every uniform, every arm band and every insignia was a threat and, even when someone spoke to us in a friendly manner, we were much too suspicious to trust anyone.

By early evening our train arrived in Vienna. The border crossing from the Protectorate into the former Austria was uneventful. Our baggage had been sealed by the German authorities in Brno. When the border guards saw the official seals they did not bother to check our luggage. They did, however, study our passports carefully and passed them around to all the agents. They all seemed very puzzled and looked at the passports several times and stared at us. Like most official documents issued to Jews, our passport had a big red letter "J" stamped on the front page and, I guess, the guards must have wondered what two little Jewish kids were doing alone on a train bound for Vienna. Both Steven and I stood there afraid that we may not be permitted to cross the border. But they finally handed the passports back to us. A heavy stone fell from our heart. We sat down as the train proceeded on to Vienna.

For years I've been trying to find out who was the nice lady who came to meet us at the Vienna railroad station. I've asked several of my cousins who used to live in Vienna who it might have been. Nobody seems to have an answer. I am pretty certain that there were no more relatives in Vienna in August 1940. Perhaps it was a maid or secretary, someone who used to work for one of my uncles. In Brno I had been simply told that a lady would meet us at the

train. I was also given a note with her name and address in case we should miss each other. But there was no need to worry. The lady met the train and took us to her apartment where we spent the night. She was very nice to us and made sure we had enough to eat and a nice place to sleep. She was alone in the apartment and I wondered where her family might be. But there wasn't much time to really get to know each other. Early the next morning we ate a quick simple breakfast and the three of us were marching back to the railroad station. We said a hasty good bye to the nice lady and ran to catch the train that would take us to Switzerland.

On the train from Brno to Vienna the previous day we shared a compartment with a young man who spoke German. Anyone who spoke German was a cause for concern. He tried to be nice to us --- helped to put our baggage on the shelf above the seats, offered us some candy, and described the countryside as it went by in front of the train's windows. All this made me very suspicious. Now, as we took our seats on the train to Switzerland, I was surprised to see the same man was joining us in the same compartment. He greeted us nicely and expressed surprise that we are sharing the same compartment once again. To me the whole thing was not quite *kosher*. Nonetheless, I tried to be civil and behaved properly. Later, during the ride, he told us that he was an officer in the Swiss Army and showed me pictures of himself in uniform. I started to believe him and to trust him. We spent a lot of time talking and the trip went by quickly.

At each stop, as the train moved towards the German-Swiss border, people would get off the train. When our train finally arrived at the border by about noon time, only about fifty passengers got out of the train along with their baggage. There wasn't really a station where we stopped. At one side was a small shack with some benches in front of it. In back of the shack were, what looked like, two outhouses --- small shacks used as toilets. Off to one side, about 500 feet away, stood another train consisting only of a locomotive and one car. We were told that this little train would take us across the border to Switzerland. A German officer came out of the shack and asked everyone to hand over their passports and exit permits. He took all the papers and disappeared

back into the shack. People made themselves comfortable on the benches or, like us, on their luggage. About ten minutes later another officer came out and called out a name. The person responded. The officer looked through the passenger's luggage, put a stamp on it, handed back the passport and told the man to board the little train. This procedure was repeated over and over again. Every few minutes an officer would come out, check the passenger's baggage, return the passport and let him go to the train. (There were no women among the passengers.) Steven and I waited and waited. The engine blew its whistle several times as if the train was getting ready to depart and we were getting very worried. I had been told that this train crossed over the border only once a week. This meant that, if we did not get on this particular train, the next chance would be after our exit permit had already expired. It was now or never!

More and more people had received their passports and the number of passengers waiting to board the little train kept getting smaller and smaller. And then, we were the only ones left --- just little Steven and I sitting on our baggage all by our lonesome in front of the shack and getting ever more panic stricken. The engine blew its whistle a couple more times and, for the first time on this trip, I was truly and completely frightened. When people are desperate and unsure of the future they may do strange things in the hope that they can assure their survival. For example, when Father landed in the United States he arrived with two large tailor's shears. Perhaps, the thinking went, to earn a living he may have to go back to the trade he learned as a young apprentice and become a tailor.

Just before our departure from Brno, Father handed me an overcoat. It was a great big heavy winter overcoat which he said was for Harold in the United States. I objected to the idea of taking this coat with us. We were only allowed to take one suitcase of our own clothing and there was no way that anyone would believe that this huge coat belonged to me. I was sure that I would be arrested. I begged Father not to make me take the coat but he said: "Just fold it over your arm, like so, and nobody will suspect that it isn't yours." I finally agreed to take it with me and dutifully carried

that heavy coat during the whole trip always making sure that it was properly folded over my arm.

Now, as the two of us sat all by ourselves at the German border crossing with panic in our hearts and trying desperately to figure out why we were in trouble, my eyes fell on "the" coat. "That's it!" I said to myself, "it's the coat! Because of this stupid coat we are not getting our passports back and will miss the train!" I made a quick decision. Stood up, grabbed the coat and walked over to one the outhouses in back of the shack and stuffed the coat behind the toilet seat. In retrospect, of course, the coat had nothing to do with our delay of getting our passport, but as far as I was concerned it worked! A few minutes later an officer finally came out of the shack with our passports. But the excitement wasn't over. The train started to move onto the main line and it certainly looked like it was going to leave any second. The border guard now wanted to start examining our luggage. I was sure that this would kill our chances to catch the train.

Fortunately, in Vienna we had made a very smart decision. Since the German seals on our luggage worked so well when we crossed the border on our way to Vienna, we decided not to open our suitcases in Vienna and leave the seals in place. This meant that we had to wear the same clothing the next day. But, no matter, it seemed like the right thing to do. Now, in our desperate situation, the seals worked their magic once again. I anxiously pointed out the seals to the officer and told him that there was no need to check the baggage as it had already been checked and sealed by the German authorities in Brno. There was a moment of hesitation and then he told us to go ahead and board the train. We grabbed our luggage and ran for the train. The Swiss army officer got off the train and ran towards us. He grabbed our bags and the three of us rushed to catch the train. Steven and I ran as fast as we could. The officer and our bags got to the train before us. Steven had fallen behind. The officer got off the train again and ran over to Steven, picked him up and carried him to the train. The three of us got to the train and, as soon as we got on board, the engine blew its whistle and started to move. We plopped down on our seats

to catch our breath. The train chugged into the mountain pass to **Magdalenburg**, Switzerland and freedom.

I should note here that Father never asked me what had happened to the coat. The subject never came up. I was relieved by this circumstance because, later on, I was very concerned that the coat may have hidden something --- papers, valuables etc. On the other hand, I doubt that Father would have exposed us to the dangers that smuggling might bring.

Some years later I related the events that had taken place at the German/Swiss border to Uncle Julius Klein and expressed my puzzlement as to who the nice Swiss officer who seemed to be watching over us might have been. "What you did not know at the time," Uncle Julius told me, "is, that the Italians did not trust the Germans and wanted to make sure you got out. So, they assigned one of their undercover men to watch your trip." I've had some doubts whether this was really the case. On the other hand, at the time, it certainly seemed like this man was really concerned about our welfare.

Switzerland was and remained neutral throughout the war. Just as in World War I, they did not take sides in World War II and thus were spared the ravages that both of these conflicts brought upon the rest of Europe. There is no question that, at one time, Germany could have easily conquered that little country. But they chose not to and so it became a tiny island of peace and tranquility in a sea of insanity. Perhaps the Germans had other reasons to keep Switzerland independent and neutral. Much of the gold, jewels and art that the Nazi officials stole were hidden in Swiss banks just in case Germany should loose the war. Many Jews also hid their precious possessions in Swiss secret bank accounts. When they died in the Holocaust, the Swiss simply kept the property. Only some 55 years later did the Swiss bankers finally agree that some of this property should be returned.

For nearly a year and a half Mother has been sitting in Switzerland, watching her world crumble and waiting for news from across the German border. I'm not sure how she managed to survive.

The tension must have been terrific. Here she was, stuck in Switzerland not knowing whether she would ever see her husband and two children ever again. Money was also in short supply. I can only guess that some of the money that Father managed to smuggle out of Czechoslovakia was available to her. Several other Jewish refugees befriended Mother and helped her out during her ordeal. One man in particular sticks in my memory. His name was Doctor Frost who had been an attorney in Germany. I probably remember him so vividly because he was totally bald --- not a single hair on his head. But, in addition, he had several ugly scars on his skull. He explained to me that, when he was a young man studying at German universities, it was a common practice for rival student groups to settle their differences with a challenge to real duels with sabers. The winner was determined by who cut the other student first. As a Jew in a German University, Dr. Frost had to defend this honor on many occasions. Now Doctor Frost carried the visible results of some of these encounters on his head. Later he moved to New York and for many years, thereafter, we remained in touch with each other. Mother often said that, if it had not been for Doctor Frost and his wife, she would have certainly gone insane from worry. Now at last, after almost giving up any hope of ever seeing her family again, Mother received a letter telling her to be in **Magdalenburg** to meet a train that may be bringing her two children to freedom.

Our little train pulled into the **Magdalenburg** station and people started getting off. We had been told that Mother should be meeting our train but, for safety sake, we were also given a couple of phone numbers which we should call in case there is no one to meet us. With the help of our companion, the Swiss officer, we got off the train and stood on the platform for a while not knowing which way to turn. Suddenly we heard our Mother calling our names. Steven saw her first and started running. It had been nearly two years since we had seen each other and now, that we were together again, we did not know what to say. We just laughed and held each other. It took a while for us to regain our balance. Mother asked whether we were hungry and we sat down in the station's restaurant and ate our first full meal where we did not need to worry about ration cards, stamps or shortages. Mother kept

asking us all kinds of questions and we tried to answer them between bites. There was so much to talk about. So many things had changed. The questions kept coming even as, a couple of hours later, we were on board a train taking us to Zurich. Steven and I remembered Zurich from our lengthy stay in 1938, but it seemed like a hundred years had passed during those 24 months.

Mother had rented a furnished room at an apartment belonging to a Miss Badeux. It was a very beautiful apartment and Miss Badeux was a very nice person who was very pleasant and friendly. In several places were large photographs of a man. Miss Badeux told us his name was Lux, that he was in the United States studying to be a doctor, that she was sending him money to help him with his studies and that, as soon as he gets his doctorate, she will join him and they will get married. Little did she know what a disappointment awaited her.

When we left Brno we were pretty certain that Father's papers would be in order in about a month and that he should be able to join us in Zurich some time in late September. We settled down for the duration. There wasn't really too much for us to do. We were not enrolled in a school. Steven and I would go for long walks exploring the city. Mother would be very concerned about us. She did not realize that we had quickly matured from a couple of children who were not allowed to go anywhere without their governess to two boys who had, for the last two years, been pretty well on their own. I am ashamed to admit it now, but my joy of being reunited with my Mother had its limits. For almost two years we had been without strict parental supervision, making our own decisions and learning to solve our own problems. Now, having our Mother telling us what we should or should not do, took a lot of effort to get used to again.

As we had hoped, Father arrived about four weeks later on October 16, 1940. I am afraid that, seeing the shape Father was in after his ordeal, was more than Mother could take. She cried and could not stop crying for a long time. Father had gained a little weight since we had last seen him in Brno, but he was still very very thin. He had a bad rash on one hand and on one side of his face

which he had developed in recent days. He was wearing a new suit and shirt which fit him better, but he still looked strange. I don't remember whether or how we celebrated the reunification of the family. I can't imagine that any of us was in any mood for any great festivities.

The room at Mrs. Badeux was not big enough for the four of us and we moved to a small "Pension". We now set about getting ready to go to the United States. A Mr. Morgenstern was Ticho Brother's representative in Zurich. He received the merchandise that Father had shipped to Switzerland, sold it to Swiss customers, billed them and collected payment. Father had instructed him to hold the money in Switzerland just in case the family might need money outside of Czechoslovakia. It was time to visit Mr. Morgenstern and pick up the money. The four of us went up to his office. Steven and I were told to wait in the reception area while Father and Mother went into Mr. Morgenstern's office. After about fifteen minutes we heard some very loud voices. There seemed to be a major disagreement between my parents and Mr. Morgenstern. About ten minutes later Mother and Father came out of the office visibly upset. As we walked back to the pension Father explained that Mr. Morgenstern had shown them a letter from the "new owners" of Ticho Brothers demanding that all monies held in the company's name in Switzerland had to be transferred to Germany. It did not matter to Mr. Morgenstern that Father had been robbed of his company and that this was most of the money we had in all the world. He insisted that, by law, the money no longer belonged to Father and must be sent to the "new owners". We met with attorneys to see whether they could help us. Their advice was to forget it. One man said: "What are you complaining about. Consider yourself lucky you got out alive."

The travel plan to the United States was dictated by current conditions in Europe. The Germans had conquered all of the European coastline with the exception of Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Sweden. There was very little traffic between Europe and the United States. What traffic existed was by boat from Portugal. The American Export Line was the only shipping company that was still carrying freight and passengers on a regular schedule between the

United States and Europe. Their ships, the Exeter, Excambion and Exelsior provided weekly service between Lisbon, Portugal, and New York. The key, therefore, was to get from Zurich to Lisbon. We had already received our visas and only had to make arrangements for the transportation. Today, American Express is principally known for their credit cards and travelers checks. Most people are not aware that American Express was, at one time, principally a travel agency. Mother's trip to the United States and back had been arranged through American Express and we now turned to this company for our travel arrangement. The three-day plan called for a train trip from Zurich to Geneva, stay overnight in Geneva, then take a bus from Geneva to Barcelona, Spain, an overnight stay in Barcelona and a train trip from Barcelona to Lisbon. If everything worked out as planned we should arrive in Lisbon the evening before our ship is scheduled to depart for New York. It took about four weeks to get everything in order. We said good bye to Miss Badeux promising faithfully that we would look up her boyfriend, Lux, as soon as we arrived in Chicago. We packed our suitcases and, on October 20th, boarded a train for Geneva. At last we were on our way to, what we hoped would become, a haven from all the strife that we had survived.

When Germany defeated France in 1940 they occupied the Northern part of the country and all of the Atlantic coast. They did not occupy the Eastern section of the country, the section that bordered on Switzerland, Italy and Spain. This area was designated as "Unoccupied France" and a puppet government run by Marshall Petain was installed by the Germans in its capitol Vichy. Petain had been a French hero of World War I but, now as an old man in his eighties, he became nothing short of a slave of the Germans. I presume that the Germans maintained this fiction of an "independent" Vichy France in order to maintain some form of control over France's vast colonial territories and the formidable French battle fleet. Before World War II, France controlled vast colonies that covered almost all of North Africa, Syria and Lebanon in the Middle East, Indochina in the Far East and various other possessions all over the globe. Through the limited power of Vichy France, the Germans were able to keep these colonies from joining the Allies in their battle against the Axis and kept the

French fleet at anchor in the harbors of the North coast of Africa. This fiction lasted for about two years. But, when the Allies captured North Africa and the French Fleet along with it, the Germans took full control of all of France. Nevertheless, this piece of political legerdemain, made it possible for us to travel from Geneva to Spain without having to cross any territory occupied by the Germans.

Very early, the day after our arrival in Geneva, we loaded our luggage unto the roof of a very old looking bus and began our trip to Spain by way of Vichy France. The bus was fully loaded. There wasn't a single empty seat. This bus was basic transportation. There wasn't any air conditioning, radio or television or an on-board bathroom. We had about forty pretty hard seats, open windows and all the noise and dust that the old bus could generate. I remembered enough of my geography to know that, in order to get to Spain, we would have to cross the Pyrranees Mountains and I was wondering how this old and fully loaded bus was going to make it. Perhaps, I thought, there was a flat area along the coast so we would not have to tackle the mountains. Soon after leaving Geneva we crossed the border into Vichy France without incident. Our bus chugged along pretty well and the French countryside passed before us. We reached the outskirts of Lyon at around lunch time and the bus pulled into a roadside restaurant so that the passengers could use the toilets and get something to eat.

When my brother Leo died at the age of nine in 1933 of complication brought on by a middle-ear infection, Mother was convinced that this was a punishment from God for her failure to maintain the Jewish traditions that she had been taught in her parent's home. Right then and there she decided that her household would be a kosher home and that we would observe the Sabbath, the holidays and all other Jewish rituals. Maintaining a kosher home while employing Czech country girls as cooks and maids wasn't easy. These simply raised domestics could not understand what all this fuss was about. Why can't we mix milk and meat? Why must meat be salted and drained before being cooked? Why separate dishes for cheese and salami? Why can't we serve milk after meat dishes? Why do we have to use a special soap to wash the dishes? All these

rules were a mystery to them and they tended to violate them whenever Mother wasn't around. Every once in a while Mother would catch them and there would be loud scolding and the "ruined" utensils would find themselves in boiling water or stuck in the ground to restore them to proper kosher use. At times there were so many forks, knives and spoons stuck in the planters of our winter garden that we used to joke that Mother was trying to grow silverware.

At this small roadside restaurant in Lyon on the way to Barcelona, Mother's dedication to our Jewish traditions was still firmly in place. Of course, she knew we could not have a kosher meal, but at least she wanted to be sure that we would not eat any obviously non-kosher food such as pork. Mother had studied French in school and now assembled her best recollections of these lessons and advised the waiter: "Nous ne mangeons pas de poisson". The waiter nodded and brought what looked like four pork chops. This upset Mother a great deal who kept repeating the "Une monge pois de poison" line. The waiter, obviously, was at a loss as to what to do. Father chimed in with his best German/French combination: "Trois Fisch. Trois Fisch." he said emphatically. The waiter nodded and brought us three beers. By then the bus was ready to leave. So we gave up, quickly ate the potatoes and vegetables on our plate, paid our bill and boarded the bus.

By mid-afternoon we reached the mountains that stood between us and Spain. If there really was a flat road along the coast our driver hadn't found it because our bus started to struggle its way up into the mountain pass. That part of the trip lasted for about three or four hours, but it seemed like an eternity. The narrow two lane road wound its way up the mountain with a sharp turn every two or three hundred feet. One moment I would be looking out the window at the side of the mountain. Then the bus would make a turn and I'd be looking down a mountainside with only a couple of feet of road keeping us from rolling down the precipice. When we came to a steep grade, the driver would shift to the lowest gear possible and the bus would creep up the slope at a snail's pace with the engine sounding as if it was going to break something any second. If going up the mountain range was frightening, coming

down the other side caused me real panic. Now the bus was going down the road with breaks squealing and engine groaning and rushing into hairpin turns that, on several occasions, I was convinced we would not negotiate. The bus passengers were totally still. Everyone just gripped their arm rests and stared ahead to see what was coming up next. There was a visible relief on everyone's face when we finally reached the valley. Around dinner time the bus pulled up to the Barcelona railroad station and we all got out and assembled our luggage.

"American Express! American Express!" my Mother shouted loudly and repeatedly pacing up and down the various station platforms. After a while a little man, wearing a hat with an American Express insignia on it, appeared, looked at our tickets, hailed a cab and escorted us to a hotel. It had been four years since the Spanish Civil War had ended with the Fascist dictator Francisco Franco firmly in power, but the city looked as if the fighting had stopped just the day before. The streets were lined with houses that still bore the scars of the fighting. Some streets were impassable in places and the people all looked like scarecrows. Each corner had a few people begging. Often there were men without legs or arms, women carrying babies or children asking for a few coins. As bad as it looked, this was nothing compared to the devastation that most of Europe would experience before World War II would come to an end.

The next morning we had a couple of hours to spend before our train for Madrid would depart. We walked around the streets. During the day the war damage looked even worse than the night before. Many houses had parts missing or were altogether just a pile of rubble. In the squares were pedestals for statues, but there was nothing on them. The parks were a mess with areas dug up and trees cut down. Most houses had marks where bullets had struck the facade. We were surprised that, almost four years after the civil war had ended, so little had been done to repair the damage. Some 55 years later Jean and I would return to a beautiful Barcelona and spend a lovely few days exploring the city.

By about ten o'clock we were back at the railroad station and

Mother was calling for American Express. The train was scheduled to arrive in Madrid by about two in the afternoon. There we had one hour to change trains for the express train to Lisbon which would arrive there at around ten in the evening. The following day, in the afternoon, our ship was scheduled to leave for New York. The start of the trip to Madrid was uneventful. However, after a while, we noticed that we had slowed down considerably. I looked out the window and saw a very strange sight. Our train was going through water! From my geography lessons I remembered that the Northern portion of Spain was drained by a big river, the Ebro. This must be it, I said to myself, the Ebro River is flooding and we are in the middle of it. As far as one could see there was the red water of the flood. The water wasn't very deep and wasn't flowing very fast but it completely covered the railroad tracks. Our train kept slowly chugging through the water as if on invisible rails. This went on for at least one hour before the water seemed to subside and the train picked up speed again. But the damage to our travel schedule had already been done. When we finally arrived in Madrid we were more than an hour late.

Mother called loudly for American Express and once again a man materialized, looked at our tickets and shook his head. He did not speak German or Czech so it was hard to communicate with him. But Mother understood his French well enough to advise us that our train, the only train for Lisbon, had already left, that there were no other trains to Lisbon and that the only thing to do was to go to a hotel and catch the train tomorrow. Mother tried to explain to the man that this was impossible and that we had to get to Lisbon to catch our ship the following day. But the man kept shaking his head. There wasn't anything he could do. Father wondered whether what the man was saying was really true or whether the man just wanted to earn the commission he would make if he got us to a hotel. After an hour or so of broken conversations and looking at schedules we finally picked up our luggage and let the man escort us to a nearby hotel. We had no idea what would happen to us if the ship left Lisbon tomorrow without us on board. We had been told that the American Export Line ships were fully booked for months in advance and that there

was a long line of people waiting for space. We might not leave Lisbon for months! And, what about our tickets? If we don't show up on time will we lose all the money we paid for them? We all were extremely concerned as these and many other questions went through our mind.

The following day we were picked up by the American Express man and taken over to the station where he found a very comfortable compartment for us in the first class section. He told us not to worry, he had bribed the conductor. So, in more luxury than we had experienced in a long time, we headed off to Lisbon not knowing what would happen to us when we got there. We arrived in Lisbon in the evening of October 22nd after a very pleasant ride and right on schedule. We immediately took a taxi cab to the American Export Line offices only to find them already closed for the day. What to do next? We hesitated for a while then told the driver to take us to the hotel where we should have been the night before. A room was found for us and we settled down for the night.

Early the next morning we stood in front of the closed offices of the American Export Lines with steamship tickets, passports and visas in hand anxiously waiting for the business day to start. The doors finally opened and we were about to learn how rumors can ruin someone's life. First, we were told that our ship had actually left three days ago, two days ahead of schedule. Why it departed early, we weren't told. Next we were told that our tickets were good for any Atlantic crossing, that it was our decision when we wanted to go and, that a cabin is available for us on the next ship which will be leaving in four days! You cannot imagine the relief we felt when we heard this news. We booked our passage immediately and settled down to a few pleasant days in Lisbon.

In Europe, aside from Switzerland, only Sweden, Ireland, Spain and Portugal remained uninvolved in the war. These countries said they were neutral and claimed that they did not favor one side or the other. In order not to be overrun by war refugees, these countries were very jealous as to who could enter their borders. Most people would not be admitted unless they already had proof that they

could also leave. However, for a few lucky people, these countries became a haven from the war, even if only temporarily. By mid-day of the first day in Lisbon, we had already learned where some of the Jewish refugees gathered. We went to the coffee house and started up conversations with some of the folks there. We quickly learned where to buy food inexpensively, where the cheaper restaurants were, what to do with your spare time, the places we should visit and many other useful details.

On the second day we ran into a few people Father knew including one of aunt Mammie's old boyfriends from Brno. He was a cabaret entertainer and he would amuse us and some of the people in the cafe by playing the piano and singing funny and risque songs he had made up. I learned that he also spoke French and I asked him if he could tell me what "Une monge pais de poisson" meant. For many years, whenever the subject of Mother's knowledge of French came up, we would tease her that she had driven one poor waiter in Lyon nearly crazy by her repeated and mistaken insistence that "We don't eat any fish"!

The U.S.S. Excalibur was part freighter and part passenger ship. It weighed 9,000 tons and its hull was painted black except for a great big United States flag that was painted on each side. The upper decks were painted white and the smokestack was black with a red stripe. I had seen pictures of the great ships of the world in my youth magazine --- ships like the Queen Mary, the Queen Elizabeth, the Normandy, the Rotterdam, the Bremen and the Amsterdam and many others. Our ship seemed very small compared to those. There weren't any fancy dining rooms on board, nor a swimming pool or night club like I've seen in the magazines. The nearest thing to entertainment were some chess sets, a ping-pong table and a shuffle board game. Nonetheless, we were overwhelmed to be, finally, on board and departing for the United States. The ship weighed anchor on October 26.

In Czechoslovakia admission of children to motion picture theaters was strictly controlled. I guess, if a film contained any kissing or sexy scenes or any violence, the film was not acceptable for children. As a result, we saw very few films and those that we did

see were almost always comedies. My film experiences revolved around Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Laurel and Hardy and Hugo Haas. Who, you say, is Hugo Haas? Mr. Haas was a star in Czech films who often appeared in comedy roles. For me he was at least as funny as Charlie Chaplin and the rest of them. He was a hero in my eyes. Our ship was on its way two or three days when Mother introduced me to a small blond lady and told me she was Mrs. Hugo Haas, the wife of the famous actor. "Is Mr. Haas also on board?" I asked anxiously. Yes, he was, I was told, but he wasn't feeling too well and how would you like to go down to his cabin and make him feel better by chatting with him. I did not have to be asked twice. I went down two decks and knocked on the cabin door. A man's voice asked me to come in. I opened the cabin door and was shocked by what I saw and smelled. The cabin was nearly completely dark and smelled very bad. A large man was sprawled on one of the beds, looking very pale and unshaven and making all kinds of strange noises. It took me a while to recognize the familiar face of Hugo Haas. It was very obvious that Mr. Haas was very very sea sick. Despite the initial shock I stayed in the cabin and we started to talk. Mr. Haas was born and raised in Brno just about 200 feet from the house where I was born. He wanted to know as much as I could tell him about his home town which he hadn't visited in years. For the balance of the trip I visited Mr. Haas every day and we spent a lot of time talking. He told me a great deal about making films, the theater and acting. He never quite recovered from his sea sickness and, when we got to New York, he was so weak he had to be carried off the ship on a stretcher.

The trip was more or less uneventful. Some days were a little rough, but most of the time we sailed along a pretty smooth sea. At night strong lights would illuminate the American Flags on each side of the boat so that no German submarines out in the ocean would try to sink us. At one point in the trip, we arrived in Bermuda and we all thought that we would land and get a chance to see the island. Instead we anchored within view off the island and stayed there for two days. We could see some warships coming and going from the harbor. We were not told why we were sitting off the coasts of Bermuda for two days, but we assumed that it had

something to do with the war.

One of the most popular features in Mlady Hlasatel, the youth magazine I received in Brno each week, was a section called: "Do you know....?" Do you know what the tallest building in the world is? Do you know what the longest river in world is? Do you know who the tallest man in the world is and how tall he is? Each week brought a new question and a new exciting answer along with a picture and all the details. I had no trouble rattling off dozens of facts on these subjects --- the Empire State Building was the tallest building in the world, the Flatiron Building in New York was the narrowest skyscraper and the Rookery in Chicago was the tallest building that did not have a steel frame, the Missouri and Mississippi were the longest waterway in the world, the Golden Gate Bridge the longest span between towers etc. etc. I was full of these statistics. Of course, I also knew that the tallest statue in the world was the Statue of Liberty in the New York City harbor. As our ship approached the coast of the United States, both Steven and I became very excited with the thought that soon we would actually get to see one of these "tallest in the world" things we had only read about in our magazines. Our ship was scheduled to arrive in New York harbor early in the morning. Steven and I got up very early, hurried to get dressed and were on the top deck even before sunrise. We wanted to be sure that we would not miss seeing the Statue of Liberty as we entered the harbor. The dawn was just breaking and the mist on the water had just started to lift as our ship sailed past the statue and into New York Harbor. By that time many other passengers were on deck with us and they were all talking very excitedly. I was overwhelmed.

Our ship sailed up the Hudson River very slowly and we got to see another "tallest thing"! There, clearly above some of the other tall buildings of downtown Manhattan, we could see the top of the Empire State Building. Our ship approached one of the many piers that used to line both sides of Manhattan. As we approached the dock, the passenger were all excited and trying to spot the faces of friends and family members in the crowd that was on the dock cheering and waving. Father, Steven and I did not really know who

to look for. But Mother ran up and down the ship eagerly scanning the faces on the dock. Suddenly she cried out: "Ernest! Willie!" and started to cry as her two brother waved back to her. Now I also spotted the familiar face of Uncle Bill Klein and, I assumed, that the man waving next to him was my Uncle Ernest Klein. Both of the uncles were waving a newspaper and were pointing to the front page which had a large picture of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on it. All of us were puzzled by this gesture. It wasn't till later that we learned that we had arrived on the Wednesday after the 1940 presidential election day and that our uncles were trying to tell us that Roosevelt had been reelected President of the United States. I have often wondered what could have possibly been in our uncles' thoughts if they believed that, as we were arriving in the United States after having barely escaped with our lives from a virtual hell, our one main concern was who had won the United States presidential election!

Mother was allowed to leave the ship and enter the United States. Father, Steven and I, along with a group of passengers, were put on board a small ferry boat that took us over to Ellis Island. Somewhere in my youth magazine I had read about this island and the millions of immigrants who had passed through it on the way to the United States. Now we were part of this history. Our stay on the island wasn't long. We were checked by a doctor, filled out a few forms and by four o'clock were on board the ferry again heading back to Manhattan. The ferry landed and we, at last, set foot on our new homeland.

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